

TEACHER & COACH



R. Mark Wootton teaches history and coaches football at the North Sanpete High School in Mt. Pleasant, Utah. He and his wife Melissa have three children: Alecia, Brady and Mariah.

TSA: The impact of TS varies from person to person. What has been the biggest impact of TS on your life?

Wootton: When you are young TS can be embarrassing. I had to deal with it, use humor and learn to roll with it. It made me quick-witted. I honestly believe it's made me a stronger person and more conscious of kids who struggle with different things.

TSA: What was it like when you were a child? Did you have any role models?

Wootton: I always liked athletes. In some ways my dad was my role model. He was a psychologist and taught school.

TSA: How did your family cope?

Wootton: They just thought I was a nervous kid, that my tics were nervous habits. I didn't know what I had until I was twenty-two or twenty-three years old. My wife saw it on TV and said, "there's a name for what you do."

TSA: Some kids withdraw, some discover a special outlet, what worked for you?

Wootton: I've always had good friends. I've always loved sports. I was always a good athlete, but I didn't have self-confidence. I was a late developer and didn't do really well in sports until I was older. As I got physically developed, I got better, sports kept me involved. I played football in college.

I was kind of the class clown, joked my way out of being embarrassed. The confidence came slowly as I was put in different situations—situations where I'd have leadership opportunities. I met my wife in college. She was a real pretty girl—a cheerleader—and she didn't care about my tics.

My TS didn't affect my schoolwork. I don't know if I was lazy. I didn't really excel in high school and I flunked out of my first college. It might be interesting to find out if it had been different if I'd known about the TS. After I did my LDS (Latter Day Saints) mission I really grew up and matured. I went back to school, got my masters too and I'm finishing my

administrator's certificate so I can become a principal.

TSA: Stress has a big impact on people with TS. Do you do anything to help alleviate your stress?

Wootton: I've been coaching the number one team in the state for two years, but you have to put it into perspective. I even tell the kids I'm coaching that no one outside the state has heard of our high school. If you keep your perspective, it takes the pressure off. I can focus on the kids having a good experience.

I try to relax, step back, take a breath. I also lift weights and do some aerobic exercise. Exercise helps me feel a little more focused.

TSA: TS is in the media a great deal lately. Some of the presentations are more realistic and more positive than others. What do you think of the role of the media in increasing awareness?

Wootton: I like a lot of what they do on TV. I'm not happy with kids with tics on talk shows, but the success stories are

good. That's when I'm into it. I like learning about athletes with TS and I'm glad that people can see that it's a chemical imbalance and not something that you do to get attention. When people understand it they don't freak out. It's wonderful for getting the information out.

TSA: Do you have any advice for the parents of kids with TS? And for the kids themselves?

Wootton: For people who have TS, having power is being in control of your situation. In elementary and high school you have no sense of control of your environment. Parents should talk to teachers about that and about letting kids run around the playground for a couple of minutes. Parents can relieve some of that pressure by being really involved.

I have the best of all possible worlds. In teaching I have control of my environment. Kids with TS should look at professions where they have control too. They can be strong, powerful people. There are tons of professions like that.

We look forward to congratulating the 2003 & 2004 nominees and awardees who will be recognized during the TSA award banquet at the National Conference. The winners from 2001 & 2002, continue to make outstanding contributions in their fields. The 2003 & 2004 names will be added to a plaque displayed in the national TSA office.

TSA Distinguished Volunteer Award — ANDREW VOGEL (2001); LAURIE A. VAN SICKLE (2002)

TSA Distinguished Educator Award 2002 — LOU PILCH

TSA Outstanding Youth Award — JORIEL SHARP (2001); KRISTEN MARIE NAZZARO (2002)

TSA Outstanding Youth Group Award 2001

- Tourette Teen Video Team
- Arthi Chandrasekaran
- Matt Heinz
- Tito Jimenez
- April Lemanski
- Natalie Lemanski
- Danny Lisker
- Peter Maroney
- Arielle Menick
- Brendan Richardson
- Max Weiss

TSA Outstanding Youth Group Award 2002

- First Annual TSA Dessert & Auction
- Leaders: Nicole Dornbusch & Jessica Stein
- Ali Behar
- Brooke Cohen
- Karin Freed
- Abigail Katzman
- Melissa Libanoff
- Brooke Mandel
- Amanda Murphy
- Janou Perzcek
- Melanie Saltzman
- Stephanie Simon
- Danielle Steinberg

